



The Real Cost of  
the Wrong Furniture  
in Healthcare

kwalu®



Ready to Buy Smarter?

The chairs looked great on day one. Then came the scratches, the chips, the replacements.

Five years later, you've paid for them—again.

If you've ever dealt with seating that looked perfect at installation but showed wear from heavy use or constant disinfecting... you already know how the wrong materials can quietly drive up cost.

This guide helps healthcare leaders spend smarter—whether replacing worn seating in waiting rooms, upgrading patient rooms, or outfitting a new care wing. It shows how furniture choice impacts costs, infection control, patient experience, and staff efficiency over time.

Upfront Price vs. Total Cost of Ownership

In healthcare, furniture is more than décor—it’s infrastructure. It affects infection prevention, patient safety, staff productivity, and operational budgets. Yet too often, purchasing decisions are made on upfront cost alone.

What looks like a deal now can cost 3–4x more over the next 10 years.

In high-use areas — waiting rooms, patient rooms, family lounges — furniture faces constant wear from wheelchairs, stretchers, mobility aids, and aggressive cleaning protocols. Even well-built commercial furniture often lasts only 2–3 years under constant cleaning and heavy use, forcing early replacements — and escalating costs.



\*\* (Based on average 10-year replacement costs of wood and metal alternatives.)



Maintenance & Labor Impact

Every time furniture breaks, your staff spends time managing the problem—time they could be spending on patient care. In healthcare, this downtime can delay room readiness for new admissions, reduce seating capacity in busy areas, and create frustration for both patients and visitors.

Furniture that requires regular refinishing, tightening, or deep cleaning creates ongoing work for facilities and environmental services teams. And when pieces become unsafe or unsightly, the disruption often leads to unplanned spending and operational stress.

Real-World Example:  
Waiting Room Maintenance  
with 40 Chairs\*

| Maintenance Task                       | Wood Chairs    | Metal Chairs   | Kwalu<br>(Protea™) |
|----------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|--------------------|
| Refinishing chipped surfaces           | 15 hrs / \$450 | —              | —                  |
| Repainting scratched or corroded metal | —              | 10 hrs / \$300 | —                  |
| Tightening loosened joints or screws   | 10 hrs / \$300 | 10 hrs / \$300 | —                  |
| Total Annual Maintenance               | 25 hrs / \$750 | 20 hrs / \$600 | 0 hrs / \$0        |

Now multiply that across waiting rooms, family lounges, and patient spaces throughout the facility.

\*Labor hours and associated costs are illustrative estimates only. Actual maintenance needs may vary based on materials, usage intensity, and facility protocols.

Infection Control Is Cost Control

Disinfection isn’t just about cleaning protocols—it’s about materials. Furniture that absorbs moisture, traps bacteria, or breaks down under EPA-approved cleaners adds risk, not value. Outbreaks can cost \$4,000–\$10,000+ in PPE, labor, and lost bed days.

What to Avoid:

- > Wood or metal frames that chip, warp, rust, or crack over time
- > Finishes that degrade under bleach-based or EPA-approved disinfectants
- > Residential-grade upholstery without fluid barriers or chemical resistance
- > Exposed seams or joints that trap moisture and bacteria

What to Look For:

- > Non-porous surfaces that resist moisture and hold up to EPA-approved cleaners
- > Seamless construction that prevents fluid collection or bacterial buildup
- > Healthcare-grade upholstery options, including:
  - Fluid-barrier backings
  - Bleach-cleanable or antimicrobial properties

When furniture looks worn, mismatched, or institutional, it sends the wrong message—especially in an era when patient satisfaction and trust directly influence both reputation and reimbursement. Worn-out chairs don’t just reflect wear—they reflect on your brand.

**What patients and visitors notice (even if staff don’t):**

- Peeling finishes or cracked arms on waiting room chairs
- Stained upholstery or worn seating
- Mismatched or outdated pieces in public areas
- Furniture visibly “on its last leg”

**Why it Matters:**

**First impressions = patient trust.** Visitors often form opinions about the quality of care before they meet a clinician, and those opinions start in the spaces they wait.

**Comfort reduces anxiety.** Patients and families are more at ease—and more receptive to care—in spaces that feel clean, safe, and welcoming.

**Reliable furniture supports staff morale.** When spaces function well and require less upkeep, teams can focus more on patient care—not repairs.





## The 10-Year ROI That Most Buyers Miss

It's easy to underestimate the true cost of furniture that isn't designed for the pace and protocols of healthcare. Even well-planned purchases can fall short if furniture isn't built for healthcare demands. Constant cleaning, high traffic, and compliance shifts often lead to earlier replacements, added maintenance, and higher long-term costs.

### Ask Before You Buy:

- > How often will this furniture need to be replaced?
- > What does it cost my team to maintain or clean it?
- > Can it be easily disinfected without degrading?
- > What message does this send to families walking in?
- > Will I still feel good about this investment five years from now?

**The Plot Twist: Kwalu was built to flip the script—on design that doesn't deliver.**

### Crafted with Protea™

Looks like wood — but isn't. Protea™ is non-porous, impact-resistant, and won't chip, crack, or warp. No refinishing. No surprises.

### Steel-Reinforced Construction

Over 20 hidden steel reinforcements in every classic chair frame. Wobble? Not in this story.

10  
YEARS

Backed by a 10-Year Performance Warranty on construction and finish. Because the best endings don't need rewrites.

**Full warranty details available upon request.**

**Want a custom ROI comparison? Let's run the numbers.**

At Kwalu, we create nurturing environments that inspire care, comfort, and connection in healthcare and senior living.

For over 40 years, we've crafted high-quality, durable furniture that enhances the spaces where people live, heal, and build community.

What sets us apart is Protea™, our proprietary, non-porous material that offers the beauty of wood with unmatched durability. Inspired by the resilient Protea flower, it ensures our furniture withstands high-traffic environments while remaining easy to clean and maintain.



kwalu®

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